



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Santa Fe National Forest

Espanola Ranger District
P.O. Box 3307, Fairview Station
1710 N. Riverside Dr.
Espanola, New Mexico 87533
505-753-7331 FAX 505-753-9411

File Code: 2230-3

Date: November 5, 2003

Dear Permittee:

This letter constitutes the year 2003 Annual Operating Instruction (AOI) for the Erosion Allotment. Range readiness inspections conducted on three key areas were conducted on October 6th, October 23rd. I appreciate the efforts of Lionel Maestas, Johnny Jaramillo, Jack Trujillo, in participating in these monitoring efforts. These inspections determined that range vegetation, and soils in the allotment were suitable for livestock turnout for the 2004 grazing season.

I. GRAZING SCHEDULE

Authorized Use on the Erosion allotment is shown below for this decision. Livestock numbers and season of use were determined in individual discussions held with the permittee and Donald Serrano of my Range Staff.

PERMITTEE NAME	NUMBER OF CATTLE/SEASON OF USE					
	Permitted	Permitted season of use	2002 % actual use*	2003 authorized	2003 authorized season of use	2003 % authorized use*
Johnny Jaramillo	54	11/1-4/30	82	35	11/1-4/30	65
Joseph Lopez	64	11/1-4/30	100	40	11/1-12/31	
				64	1/1-2/28	
				40	3/1-3/31	
				30	4/1-4/30	72
S&L Maestas	60	11/1-4/30	87	55	11/1-12/31	
				50	1/1-4/30	86
Phil Sanchez	77	11/23-5/23	100	77	1/1-5/23	79
Jack Trujillo	20	11/1-4/30	80	12	11/15-4/30	56
Alex Vigil	28	11/1-4/30	0	0	N/A	0
TOTAL	303		83	243**		68

* Use is based on a combination of time and number of cattle. Odd numbers were rounded up.

** Maximum number of cattle on the allotment at a given time.

I appreciate your voluntary effort in reducing your permitted numbers and or season of use in these recent years of below average precipitation and reduced forage production. If there is any changes to these permitted numbers please contact Donald Serrano. Your non-use is documented as resource protection non-use and not personal convenience non-use.



Pasture schedule for the Erosion Allotment is shown below for this decision.

SOUTH PASTURE	NUMBER OF CATTLE	MIDDLE PASTURE	NUMBER OF CATTLE	NORTH PASTURE	NUMBER OF CATTLE
Phil Sanchez	77	S&L Maestas	55	Johnny Jaramillo	35
	0	Joseph Lopez	64	Jack Trujillo	12
	1	Alex Vigil	0		
TOTAL	77		124		47

Past and predicted drought conditions may require that cattle be moved through the units quicker or removed from the allotment earlier than expected. This decision will be made in cooperation with you and based on the utilization for key species on agreed upon and field verified key areas. The District Ranger in coordination with grazing permittees may change the routing plan described above when unforeseen circumstances such as lack of water in pasture or over use within the pasture. The grazing association or the permittees can propose changes of pastures outside of the above routing plan in coordination with this office. The grazing association or permittees, should submit a written justification to this office or coordinate with Donald Serrano of my Staff if a routing plan needs to be changed. The decision made by the District Ranger will be based upon the condition of the range, recommendations of the range staff, and the needs of the permittees.

II. COUNTING AND TAGGING

New tagging will occur on the Erosion allotment this year. At our September 22, 2003 validation meeting we discussed tagging protocol for this year. Please contact Donald Serrano for tags if you have already not done so. As identified in your grazing permit the calf counter policy is "Any animal 6 months of age or older as of January 1 is considered a counter. Calves less than 6 months of age as of January 1 become counters on March 1. All weaned animals are counters regardless of age."

III. EXCESS USE

As stated in Part 3 of your term grazing permit, "Livestock grazed in excess of the numbers, outside of the period use, or of a class or kind not authorized in the current Bill for Collection. When the annual application is approved, in whole or in part, livestock grazed in excess of authorized numbers must be removed from lands of the National Forest System. Grazing use by livestock in excess of that authorized in the current Bill for Collection is cause for cancellation and/or suspension of the permit in whole or part and must be assessed at the "unauthorized use rate".

IV. UTILIZATION/MONITORING

The proper utilization of forage is a critical factor in livestock management on the Erosion allotment. As discussed earlier monitoring will be scheduled regularly to insure that utilization levels are within recommended levels. As always grazing association directors and permittees are encouraged to participate while these evaluations are being made. Methods for monitoring

utilization are adopted from Holecheck and DeGalt (2000). The following describes utilization levels, we agreed to for the 2003/2004 -grazing season.

Use indicators and levels are highlighted below and generally correlate to a 40 % use on forage plants.

Table 3. Qualitative characteristics of grazing intensity categories used to characterize New Mexico rangelands (Holechek & Galt, 6/00, Rangelands).		
Qualitative Grazing Intensity Category	Use of Forage by Weight	Qualitative Indicators of Grazing Intensity
Light to non-use	0-30	Only choice plants (key species) and areas show use. There is no use of poor forage plants
Conservative	31-40	Choice forage plants (key species) have abundant seed stalks; Areas more than a mile from water show little use; About one third to one half primary forage plants show grazing on key areas.
Moderate	41-50	Most of accessible range show use; Key areas show patchy appearance with one half to two thirds of primary forage plants (key species) showing use; Grazing is noticeable 1-1½ miles from water
Heavy	51-60	Nearly all primary forage plants show grazing on key areas: Palatable shrubs show hedging: Key areas show a lack of seed stalks: Grazing is noticeable in areas over 1½ miles from water
Severe	61+	Key areas show a clipped or mowed appearance (no stubble ht.): Shrubs are severely hedged; There is evidence of livestock trailing to forage; Areas over 1½ miles from water lack stubble height.

We also discussed minimum stubble heights corresponding to conservative grazing. These guidelines were communicated to the grazing community from a letter sent by David Stewart, Director of Rangeland Management, Southwestern Regional Forest Service Office to Dr. John Fowler, New Mexico Range Improvement Task Force, New Mexico State University. This letter was shared with the Erosion permittees at our September 22nd, 2003 validation meeting. Below are minimum stubble height requirements for key species on the Erosion allotment.

COMMON NAME	SPECIES NAME	STUBBLE HEIGHT THRESHOLD (inches)
Blue gramma	Bouteloua gracilis	1.5
Galleta	Pleuraphis jamesii	2.5
Alkali sacaton	Sporobolus airoides	4
Little bluestem	Schizachyrium scoparium	8
Sand dropseed	Sporobolus cryptandrus	8

In addition use on woody vegetation should not exceed 50% of current years growth. This includes Cottonwood, Coyote Willow (within Rio del Oso) and True Mountain Mahogany (*Palo duro*).

Both the Forest Service and the permittee are responsible for monitoring use and stubble height on the allotment to ensure that proper use levels are **not exceeded**. If areas within a pasture or the pasture as a whole begin to approach the identified stubble heights, actions will need to be taken to limit additional forage use.

Forage use patterns, cattle numbers, salting practices, and coordination of improvements should be monitored periodically to determine when livestock should be moved between pastures. If use within that key area is approaching allowable stubble heights then the remaining key areas will also be monitored and the pasture inspected to determine overall use patterns. This information will be used to determine if cattle need to be re-distributed within the pasture or removed from the pasture.

V. IMPROVEMENT WORK

As a result of our continuing discussions on illegal trash dumping and ORV damage it is anticipated that entryways in the allotment will be gated. On October 31, 2003 I met with representatives from Rio Arriba County and Lionel Maestas on the Erosion allotment to discuss these proposed closures. These closures are an attempt to curb some of this illegal activity. Administrative access will still be allowed in selected entryways. I welcome your feedback concerning this proposal.

VI. SPECIAL MITIGATION MEASURES

In order to conform with the final U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service "Biological Opinion for Ongoing Livestock Grazing Activities on Allotments" which determine a No Affect and/or May Affect Not Likely to Adversely Affect on your allotment, **the following conditions must be met.**

Forage Utilization

Forage use by grazing animals will be maintained at or above a condition, which assures recovery and continued existence of threatened and endangered species. In order to attain this standard, the above site-specific key areas and key forage utilization standards have been developed for the Erosion allotment.

Mineral Supplements/Salt Blocks

Mineral supplement/Salt block sites will be regularly rotated to reduce trampling and grazing impacts to vegetation. Cutting salt blocks in half before distributing them on the range is an easy way to avoid having to move them, as they get used before they need to be moved. In addition, all salt must be at a minimum ¼ mile from any water source.

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL

District Ranger decisions regarding issuance, denial, or administration of grazing and livestock use permits may be appealed in accordance with 36 CFR 251, Subpart C. The following standard paragraph is included in this Annual Operating Plan for the purpose of ensuring that you are aware of your appeal rights.

This Annual Operating Instruction (AOI) is hereby made a part of your term grazing permit.

This decision is subject to administrative review pursuant to 36 CFR 251, Subpart C and any appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 251.90 (see attached). In accordance with 36 CFR 251.84, if you file an appeal, I am willing to meet with you to discuss any concerns you may have with my decision. If you file an appeal, you may request an oral presentation in the appeal or at any time prior to closing of the appeal record (36 CFR 251.97). Additionally, if you file an appeal, you may request a stay of my decision in the appeal or at any time prior to closing of the appeal record (36 CFR 251.91).

A notice of appeal, including the reasons for appeal, must be filed with Gilbert Zepeda, Forest Supervisor, Santa Fe National Forest, P.O. Box 1689, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-1689 within 45 days of the date of this decision. A copy of the notice of appeal must be filed simultaneously with myself John Miera, Espanola District Ranger, at, P.O. Box 3307, Fairview Station, 1710 N. Riverside Dr., Espanola, New Mexico 87533. I appreciate you contacting me to resolve disagreements before you file any Notice to Appeal. This will insure that we both understand the reasons for each other's position regarding any issues. If you have any further questions concerning this matter please contact Donald Serrano of my Staff at the above phone or address.

Sincerely,

/s/ John P. Miera
JOHN P. MIERA
Espanola District Ranger